



# WEEKLY BUSINESS REVIEW

This Page Devoted Every Week to the Interests of Washington Industrial, Building and Business Firms



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## ERRATIC CHANGES FEATURE WEEK'S TRADE SITUATION

General Characterization Well Nigh Impossible, Says Bradstreet's.

## APPARELS ARE BEST

Irregularities Accompany the Process of Economic Readjustment, Says Dun's.

Bradstreet's review of trade conditions for the past week says in part:

"Cross currents and irregularity feature the general commercial and industrial situation, and broad general characterization is difficult—indeed, well-nigh impossible. As for over a month past, the so-called apparel trades turn in the best reports, whereas the iron, steel, coal and lumber and other lines of building supplies offer the least satisfactory advices. Of the former, it may be said that while marked favorable changes or gains are not shown as compared with recent weeks, few backward steps are visible, and the contrast with the reports made two or three months ago is much in favor of current distribution. General distributive trade is, perhaps, on the whole, better, and while small-and-often buying rules, there is more life and hope in trade and industries catering to these lines. Especially is cotton manufacturing more active than it was two months ago, and kindred and related trades, such as mill supplies, are more optimistic. Wool buying is nearer normal than for months past. Collections, however, do not gain keeping with the increase in cotton manufacturing in trade. In the big basic metal trades, if copper, which is seeing a new idea of disposition tried out, be excepted, the situation is no better, but indeed worse, in that prices of steel are being cut by concern and new business, while several grades of pig iron are lower. Increased and very marked weakness is also noted in crude and refined petroleum. Coal demand does not seem to improve and output is sagging, with consequent increase in unemployment. On balance, this latter, however, does not seem any worse than it was, resumption and increased time run, as in cotton goods, some silk lines, and to a slight extent, in the automobile and accessory trades, about offsetting increased quiet or wage reductions in others.

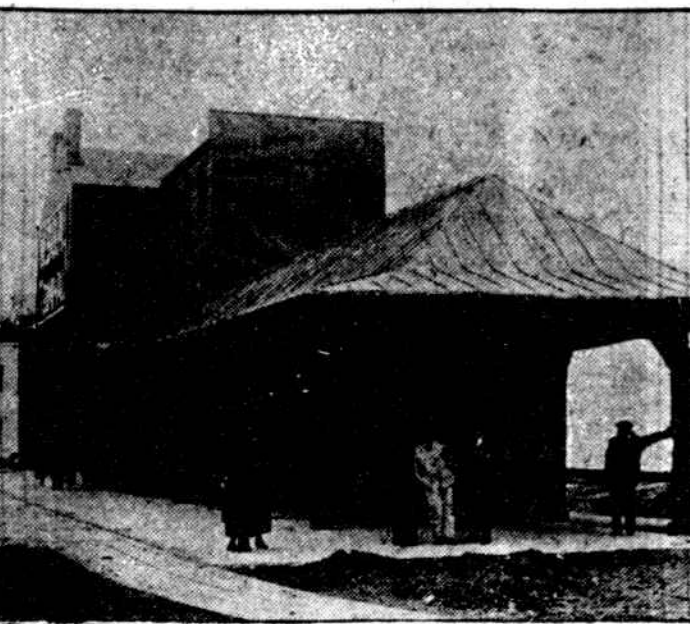
**Situation Lacks Form.**

"In general financial lines the situation still lacks form, the stock market being narrow with short swings, whereas the bond market is in pretty good shape, and new and really very large offerings of interest-bearing securities, foreign and domestic, are being absorbed with marked ease. The big speculative commodity markets also witnessed frequent swings this week, on the whole showing more strength. Of prices generally it may be said that the trend is still downward after a smaller net decline in the Index Number in January than was witnessed in any previous month since last spring. In the building trades about half the value of construction permitted for in January a year ago is forecast, but the gain over January two years ago, also a period of depression, is very considerable. Good reports enter what are at times possible by mild weather and moisture in surplus areas. With foreign news bullish, wheat is up sharply on bullish views as to domestic supplies, and flour is stronger, though not much more active. Spring-wheat flour has moved up sharply at Chicago. Bank clearings show a smaller decrease from last week and from a year ago than has been shown in recent weeks. Failures are more numerous this week than last."

**Dun's Views.**

The irregularities which still characterize the business situation are a natural accompaniment of the process of economic readjustment, says R. G. Dun in the weekly review of business conditions. With conflicting forces in operation, commercial revival has not come in all quarters simultaneously, and a definite turning point is yet to be reached in some leading trades and industries. Unsettledness in prices with the trend continuing downward, remains a cause for hesitation in different lines, and such new demand as develops does not indicate that buyers are disposed to commit themselves extensively for the future. At prices much below the highest basis, there is not the volume of purchasing that might be expected, because various markets lack stability and orders are deferred to take advantage of probable further reductions. The number of small-lot transactions, however, is increasing in certain directions, suggesting that some stocks are beginning to need replenishing, and not a little machinery that was recently idle has started up again on part-time schedules. While the unusually mild winter has been detrimental to retail distribution, consumption of some goods is being quickened by substantial price concessions, and the large attendance of visiting merchants in the wholesale centers is evidence of a growing interest in merchandise offered at low prices. With sellers no longer holding the commanding position, competition to secure business is much more noticeable and a wide range of quotations prevails in some of the principal primary branches. Attempts to advance prices when demand revives invariably result in the withdrawal of buyers, although premiums have been paid in isolated instances for supplies to cover special requirements. The trade dispatches from the different sections of the country are not sufficiently uniform to make generalization easy, but the main tendency is still toward gradual improvement in conditions.

## W. B. & A.'s Newest Facility



The waiting station and boarding platform of the new terminal of the Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis Railway Company, situated at Twelfth street and New York avenue northwest. This new terminal recently completed at a tremendous cost to the company, has additional facilities, (not shown in the picture above) which ranks with any short line road in the country.

## NEW RILEY SIGN EVOKES INTEREST

School Official Puns Words in Discussing Institution's Merits.

High up on the third story of a building at 1115 F street northwest hangs a new sign that glitters in the sun attracting the attention of thousands of passers-by who look puzzled as they read the strange device: "Riley School of Spinal Therapy."

"Must be something new," people remark, and many go in, take the elevator to the third floor in order to satisfy their curiosity as to the real meaning of the golden legend on the wall outside.

Of course they all surmise that it has something to do with the spine, but, perhaps for the first time, these people, who never gave a thought to their spines, taking them as a matter of course, ask themselves this question: "Is the spine of sufficient importance to found a school on?"

Answering the question themselves without further enlightenment, the usual conclusion reached is: "Well, anyway, the school ought to have plenty of backbone." And this off-hand conclusion is exactly right. The school has plenty of backbone. It was founded on backbone, is being purged on backbone and will be expanded on backbone. "Backbone" is its watchword, its emblem and motto.

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Sunshine Establishment Holds Weekly Excursions for Inspection of Works.

One solution to the growing practice enjoyed by the Arcade Laundry and Sunshine Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Company, of 713-31 Lamont street northwest, can be attributed to the weekly "excursions" operated by the plant. This novel idea, originated by L. O. Cook, vice president and general manager of the company, is an invitation extended to all women's clubs and associations in the city of Washington to inspect their big modern plant, which is reputed to be the largest, most scientific and sanitary establishment in the United States if not in the world.

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Mr. Cook states hearty responses have been tendered his efforts on behalf of the ladies of Washington. The dry cleaning department has qualified as one sending forth a class of work of which there can be no criticism. The evenness of the cleaned cloth as the standard of results leaves no doubt in the mind of the patron.

So well has the fame of this big Washington establishment spread that it was the object of an especial journey to the Capital by a committee of London laundriesmen en route to San Francisco to attend the National Laundrymen's convention.

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## STEEL'S DRASTIC CHANGES CONTAIN CLOUDED FUTURE

Possibilities Bind Situation and Conditions Are Chaotic.

## "CUTS" ARE SCORED

Many Leading Authorities Insist Such Action Tends To Demoralize.

Expectations have been fulfilled in the steel trade and the predictions made in these columns that price reductions would be heard of in the near future have been confirmed. Naturally such a drastic change in the situation is fraught with possibilities and at the present time conditions are quite chaotic, with no one willing to make a forecast as to what might be expected of the future.

It has been fairly evident for some time that more than one independent steel company would be compelled to lower prices in an effort to get business, although there are many of the leading authorities who insist that such action will result in demoralization among the buyers who are not expected to rush into the market when there is even a remote possibility of a price war. While the first official admission that prices were being reduced came during the past week, the fact is that several of the independents have been quietly and even secretly quoting lower figures whenever an attractive inquiry came into the market, and past history has shown that such methods are always followed by open warfare.

There is no doubt that the Midvale Steel and Ordnance Co., which made the first public reduction, of 10 per cent, admitting that they had decided to go out after business, will find considerable competition from other independent companies. But, as stated by Judge Gary, the United States Steel Corporation is not contemplating any change at this time, so that the price cutting for a while at least, will be between the independent producers.

**Cuts Are Contemplated.**

It can be stated on reliable authority that the plans of the independents call for a wage reduction of from 15 to 25 per cent to be effective in the Youngstown district in or about February, and some interests are of the opinion that because of this proposal the price reduction was allowed to become public, so as to influence the attitude of the workers in the matter. This would be the argument that the lower quotations are responsible for the wage reductions.

According to some observers close to the management of the Steel Corporation, the leading interest is likely to make any attempt to meet the competition from the smaller companies, first, because there is only a moderate volume of new business in sight, and second, because the order books of the Steel Corporation are still overflowing with substantial tonnage to be filled.

As a matter of fact the point has been made that the Steel Corporation has every reason to continue its stability owing to those large unfilled orders, and by maintaining its prices the leading interest can continue the present wage rates. No doubt the fact that workers in the small steel plants are getting a lower rate will have a beneficial effect on the attitude of the employees of the Steel Corporation and result in increased efficiency which will result in a slight reduction in the costs of the big company.

**May Seek Cancellations.**

Everyone who knows the steel industry is hoping that it will be possible to avert an open price war, in which there are cutting prices. It is this develops there is no doubt that the Steel Corporation will take steps to meet the quotations of its competitors.

During January the Steel Corporation is estimated to have shipped out something like 1,100,000 tons, and the new business received was approximately 750,000 tons, a difference of about 350,000 tons. This is considered a good showing, and had it not been for the withdrawals from customers, including the railroads, the decrease would have been much smaller than many would have believed possible. The figures of shipments and new orders did cause considerable surprise in many quarters.

There was not much to the various markets during the past week, the largest being 14,000 tons by the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, and 10,000 tons by the Oregon and Washington Railroad. These contracts went to the Illinois Steel Company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation.

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